DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 238 880 SP 023 657

AUTHOR Mawson, L. Marlene
TITLE Sex Role Socialization in Sport.
PUB DATE 29 Oct 83
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (October 29, 1983).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Athletics; Attitude Change; *Females; *Sex Bias; Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes; Social Action; *Social Attitudes; Social Influences; Socialization; *Womens Athletics

ABSTRACT

Sport values follow societal values, and, in American society, it is evident that men have determined the social, political, and economic values upon which this country has established its laws. An overview of the social influence of men in comparison to that of women in the development of American society points out how men and women have assumed their respective sex roles in the culture, and, similarly, their roles in sport. The sociocultural development in America is consequential to the sex-role socialization of men and women, and influential as such to the manner in which males and females engage in sport. The control and perpetuation of prescribed sex-role behaviors is assured through subtle harassment of persons who do not conform to stereotype. A chart illustrating the perpetuation of sex-roles for women lists the sociocultural influence (media, employment, family relations, legal, political, economic, and educational), the female stereotype in each milieu, the social and sport harassment evident in each, and the counter-actions necessary to overcome both stereotyping and harassment. (JD)

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Sex Role Socialization In Sport

by L. Marlene Mawson

Sex bias and stereotyping are forms of subversive sexual harrassment faced by young girls and women who pursue athletic endeavors in today's society. The sex role socialization of females in sport has been cultured, both by men and by women. This sex oriented enculturation has been based on unscientific principles, and beliefs that female sport participants require protection from the emotional and physical assertiveness engendered by sport.

Sport, as a competitive experience, portrays characteristics consistant with social interaction behaviors ascribed for males in the American culture; however, this competitive image of sport is in conflict with social expectations for females. Thus is established an impossible dichotomy for young girls, between the pursuit of athletic endeavors requiring masculine-like behaviors, or developing the social graces becoming to the more docile feminine individual.

To be successful in sport is to be stereotyped as displaying masculine-like behaviors. Stereotyping women athletes as being characteristic of males is a form of sexual harrassment. It is the reinforcement of sex bias and subtle harrassing insinuations aimed at female athletes that is important to identify and to eliminate.

The reinforcement of sex-bias comes from sex role socialization in the culture. The American culture perpetuates the belief that women are subordinate to men in the society. Religious teachings, patriarchial laws, and customs in this society insure that the cultural bias endures. In this manner, the American society has created distinctive expectations for masculine and feminine social behaviors and personal traits.

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Sport is a mirrored microcosm of the society from which it comes. In American sport, the ultimate goal is competing to win. This goal adheres to the Puritan work ethic of continuous effort and perfection. Sport also provides opportunity for evidencing personal traits consistant with competition and winning. Sport ascribes to demonstration of dominance, independence, strength, aggressiveness, and other characteristics indicative of intense competition. The values held for sport are consistant with those held for masculinity in the culture.

This parallelism is not accidental. Sport values follow societal values, and in retracing the formulation of American values, it is evident that men have determined the social, political and economic values upon which the country established its laws. Likewise, men have prescribed the parameters of sport. An overview of the social influence of men in comparison to women, in the development of the American society, assists in comprehending how men and women have assummed their respective sex roles in the culture, and similarly, their roles in sport.

Men have, historically, been dominate in Western societal cultures. There has been a self-perpetuating assumption that men, as the providers of substistance, are more important than women and children who depend on men for subsistance. Thus, those masculine characteristics necessary for providing subsistance have prevailed as the measure of success in the American society. Likewise, these same masculine characteristics describe the attributes of viable participants in sport. Conversely, appropriate feminine characteristics have been described as dependent, submissive, weak, but visually attractive; characteristics suitable for her subordinate social place, but incompatible with sport.

Early American colonists based their ascription of superiority of the male on biblical teachings. Both Protestants and Catholics in the new world believed that women were divinely meant to be subordinate to men. Patriarchial laws were enacted assuring that the new world society would adhere to social standards and values which placed men in a dominate role. These laws served to bar women from

educational advantage, from economical independence, and from social equality with men. (Myrdal, 1944)

The Olympic Games linked religion to physical prowess and ability of men in early civilization, but this ungodly ritualization was denounced by the Puritanical leaders of the New World as neglectful of spiritual matters. Therefore, sport participation in the colonial era was sparse due to religious teaching and the Puritan work ethic; however, leisure pastimes such as horse racing were enjoyed by women as spectators while men participated. (Spears and Swanson, 1978)

The subordination of women to men continued unabated in the American society without resistance until the women's suffrage movement prior to the Civil War. At the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention in London, women delegates from the United States were refused admission, instigating the first women's rights convention. (Myrdal, 1944) Men, during this Pre-Civil War period, engaged in the competitive sports of football and baseball, while women remained as spectators.

The suffrage movement was abandoned amidst the conditions of civil war; and although at the conclusion of the war, the Negro won emancipation and voting rights through the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth Constitutional Amendments, women were to continue as American citizens without civil rights nor opportunity for social equality for another half century. (Roszak, 1969) Even so, industrialization, urbanization, transportation, and technology offered women greater latitude of social freedom but more resistance in the labor force by the end of the Nineteenth Century. As Hacker (1965) explained,

> In the wake of the Industrial Revoluation, as women acquired industrial, business, and professional skills, they increasingly sought employment in competition with men. Men were quick to perceive them as a rival group and made use of economic, legal, and ideological weapons to eliminate or reduce their competition. They excluded women from the trade unions, made contracts with employers to prevent tneir hiring women, passed laws restricting the employment of married women, caricatured the working women, and carried on ceaseless propaganda to return women to the home or keep them there. (Hacker 1951, p. 67)

Although industrialization created jobs for women in urban areas, their meager earnings legally belonged to the male head of the household. Even Elizabeth Cady Stanton, proponent of women's suffrage believed that, "women accepted their degraded state because they could see no way of escaping it." (Lucas & Smith, 1970, p. 252). Likewise, women have accepted their oppressed state in sport participation.

The end of the Nineteenth Century was a golden era in the rise of sport in America. Industrialization and technology had created more leisure time from a shortened work day. The lightened work load enabled women to work at jobs formerly requiring physical strength; and in turn, there was concern that men, in the absence of heavy physical labor, might become effiminate. Expressing masculine characteristics through participation in sport was the viable answer. Subsequently, sport participation for males became physically rough and more competitive by the end of the century. (Twin, 1979)

Meanwhile women were also engaging in sporting activities during their leisure hours. The social mores of the affluent social classes permitted women to engage in activities which displayed their grace and beauty, the epitome of femininity. Thus, a definition of sex roles in sport began to develop. Such sports as tennis, golf and skating were consistant within the prescribed femininity characteristics and were therefore acceptable for women of affluence at the close of the century. (Leonard, 1980)

The advent of the bicycle brought the bloomer as a dress-code adaptation specifically for women engaging in sport activities. The new game of basketball became extremely popular for women after rule adaptations were made to exempt excessive physical exertion and competition, neither of which was considered to be feminine. As late as the second decade of the Twentieth Century, physiologists and sociologists were asserting the physical and emotional inferiority of women due to their reproductive functions; however, there was a predominance of male opinion that women could participate safely with shorter and less strenuous

activity sessions. (Twin, 1979)

World War I allowed women to prove themselves as physiologically capable of performing in men's work; and, organized coincidentally by the labor force during the war, women banded together once again in a women's suffrage movement after the war. Although women remained oppressed by patriarchial laws after being emancipated in 1920, they finally had a political voice.

Women took advantage of a decade of sporting liberty during the affluent decade of the twenties. Socially accepted characteristics for femininity were stretched to the exploitation stage as men began to competitively manage women's sports teams, and uniforms became increasingly more revealing of the female body. Mrs. Herbert Hoover, presiding as President of the Women's Division of the newly established National Amateur Athletic Fedearation, sought to quell the "masculine image" of women athletes by abolishing the public display of women's competition. Women physical education leaders supported the sanction against public display of women's sports on the basis that it was physiologically unsound and socially degrading since it promoted the masculine-like incentive to "defeat" an opponent. Women continued to participate in sport activities, but mainly under the organization and supervision of women instructors in schools. (Lucas & Smith, 1978)

The troubled economic times of the Great Depression forced women to accept jobs with the lowest pay, if they were employed at all. The patriarchial laws favored the employment of males over females, further exemplifying the lower social status of females in society. Sport participation filled many leisure hours for those without jobs, and for the multitude who could not afford other forms of entertainment. (Dixon, 1969)

The onset of the American involvement in World War II changed the status of the American women's economic opportunities. Women constituted nearly half of the professional and technical positions in the labor force during the Second World War. However, upon the return of the G.I., most women regressed to the

"Victorian pedestal" of being the feministic ideal to men. Only a third of the women holding professional positions during the war retained them for a career. (Dixon, 1969)

While women reared the "Baby Boom" of the post war era, the G.I. Bill, (which was only provided for male servicemen) encouraged an expanded enrollment of men in colleges. These young men provided college athletic coaches with the equivalent talent normally found in a four-year time span, all eligible at once for four years of collegiate athletics. With an expanded pool from which to select athletic talent, and a more mature young man than the normal post-high school eighteen year-old, men's college athletics immediately increased in skill expertise and sophistication, and college athletics began a new golden era of sport. Sport competition became the epitome of masculinity on every college campus, while women's collegiate participation in sports remained relegated to the women's gym, indicative of low competitive skill with little public exposure, and the approval of women physical educators.

The post war windfall of talent in men's collegiate athletics left coaches in the dilemma of recruiting equivalent talent in the years to follow. Women decried the exploitation of men's collegiate athletic programs, and were further convinced that their philosophical position of aversion from the economical hazards of collegiate sport was enviable.

Olympic events were opened for women in the 1920's, but they were only individual events. At the 1964 Olympics, volleyball became the first team sport to be played by women. As an embarrassing result of the American women's lack of competitive success in the competition, a series of five Olympic Development Institutes were organized during the decade of the sixties to re-establish a skill base for a nation of girls and women who had been deprived of competitive sport incentive for three decades. (Twin, 1969)

During the sixties decade, social unrest was developing on three fronts which was to change the social role restrictions of women in America. Professional

working women were frustrated over inequities with men in their jobs, suburban housewives were bored after raising their post-war children, and the political unrest on college campuses inspired by Vietnam, provided the forum for a resurgence of effort toward social and economical equality between women and men. (Dixon, 1969)

The proclamation of the Equal Rights Amendment, and the ramifications of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 caused male politicians, educators, and businessmen to take more serious consideration of the social inequities of women than they had before because women were gaining a legal means for insuring equal social and political status in the culture. (Oglesby, 1978) Men in school and college sports programs viewed the equal opportunity for both sexes inherent in Title IX as a threat to the economic stability and social esteem of male dominated sports. The National Collegiate Athletic Association, an all-male bastion at the time, requested Congressional hearings of their proposal to eliminate men's athletics from the Title IX requirements which was subsequentially denied.

Through the proposed ERA, women of the 1970 decade were calling attention to the patriarchial laws of various states which had deprived them of civil rights granted in the U.S. Constitution. Technological advances which assurred safe methods of birth control enabled young women to be more socially independent without the physically inhibiting consequences that their female predessors had. The social definitions of what constituted "masculine" behavior and what was "feminine" was further entertwined, and was therefore less rigid for both sexes. In protest to established societal role expectations, young people, regardless of sex, grew long hair and donned a universal uniform of denim jeans in protest of social codes of appearance.

Girls and women's sport opportunities in the decade of the Seventies were drastically increased by the establishment of a national organization (AIAW) sponsoring collegiate championships for women, and by the National Federation

of State High School Athletic Association offering girls championships in all states by 1978. The social acceptance of women in sport was becoming eminent. Women proved to be as athletically, and as physically able as men, when strength or size were neutralized in the sport skill. Attitudes and expectations of women began to change toward acceptance of females in sport. A true test of the extent of acceptance came when the male-dominated NCAA estimated that televised broadcasts of women's collegiate sport was an economic asset which they wished to control. However, even though sport participation had been accepted for women, a double standard still prevailed. Women sports participants were still expected to display feminine characteristics of beauty and graciousness while winning or losing.

The social worth of women in society rose during the decade of the seventies as women rejoined the work force to earn a second family income due to inflation, or as a single independent income of a young career woman. By the beginning of the 1980's, 50% of women were working as a second income (CBS News, 1983) but the average $20,000 yearly income of the American male still ranked higher than the average $13,000 general income of the female workers. (AP News, 1983)

Similarly, sport paralleled society in expressing the difference in the perceived worth of men and women in professional sports. By the mid-seventies, only 10% of high school athletes were girls, but by the end of the decade the percentage had tripled. The increased participation of girls in sport has apparently influenced public opinion as reflected in a 1982 national survey which reported that 86% of Americans believe girls should participate in sports. Approximately the same percentage of parents would be satisfied for their daughter to have a career in sports. (Boutilier and San Giovanni, 1983)

The question of the place of women in sport has become of concern during the 1970's, especially as sport participation involves the feminine role in society. A few research studies have centered on sex role socialization in

young sport participants, but the use of college athletes as subjects have dominated most research studies concerning the masculine/feminine role in sport.

The early research at the beginning of the decade focused on perceived femininity and appropriateness of the type of sport for participation. A study by DeBacy, Sparth and Busch (1970) revealed that college men in 1970 had a moderately positive attitude toward women's competition, regardless of their own sports participation. College men in 1970 identified tennis and swimming as the most appropriate sports for women. Malumphy (1970 conducted a four-year study of women athletes participating in National Intercollegiate Tennis and Golf Championships and found that they perceived their sport participation to be compatible with their feminine image. In a study by Snyder and Sprietzer (1976), of girls who were high school athletes in gymnastics, track and basketball in 1975, it was reported that while 70% of the gymnasts perceived of themselves as "feminine", less than half of the basketball players and about half of the track girls felt "feminine". It was determined that a third of the basketball and track athletes began participating in organized sports as a child, but nearly half of the high school gymnasts started organized competition in childhood. The girls in this study would have been pre-school age in the mid 1960's, when gymnastics was promoted in America as an Olympic sport for women. This was a time when track and basketball were not sanctioned with a high social status for girls.

Snyder and Kivlin (1977) compared women athletes from teams in the 1972 National Intercollegiate Championships in gymnastics, swimming, track and basketball with college women who were not athletes. They found that, contrary to the expectation that women athletes would consider themselves more "liberated" from "feminine" social expectations than non-athletes, that the reverse was in fact true. Women athletes were more traditional in their perception of a woman's role than was the non-athletes. It may have been that the women athletes had been carefully trained to accept and to perform a dual role. They may have

exhibit an achievement oriented competitor in athletics, and a submissive role in social and employment environments.

By the close of the decade, it was not so important to match sport participant's roles with femininity. College women who participated on intercollegiate swimming and basketball teams in 1980 were compared (Uguccioni and Ballantyne, to non-athletes to determine differences in sex role orientations and values. Women athletes were considered to be either androgynous with conservative attitudes toward their sex role, or masculine with liberal attitudes toward the female athlete's sex role. Kingsley, Brown and Seibert (1977) presented results from a 1977 study of women collegiate athletes and non-athletes which revealed that women athletes identified with other women athletes, and that the attitude toward women athletes was positive and socially acceptable by all college women. Thus, they disclaimed previous negative connotations toward female participation in sport.

Other research studies concerning women in sport turned to social attitudes toward females participating in sport.

Nixon, Maresca, and Silverman (1979) conducted a study in 1976 in which college men and women were queried concerning their attitudes toward opportunity for females in sport, their attitude toward female participation in male sport realms, and masculine/feminine socialization in sport. They found that in all three aspects, college women were more likely than college men to be accepting of the involvement of females in sport, without reservation. Both men and women rejected the position of restricting sports to only males. Greendorfer (1979) found that both men and women collegiate track athletes began their sport participation as children and were similar in all dimensions studied except peer influence. Male athletes were more likely to be influenced by their peers and male role-models, while brothers of the female track athletes and female role-models were most influential for female track athletes.

It has also been recognized that parental attitude toward female involvement in sport persuasivelyinfluences their children. Spreitzer and Snyder (1976)

conducted a preliminary study to determine interpersonal influences of the family on sport participants. Parents, particularly the father, was found to have the greatest influence for sport participants, although early childhood participation in sport activity greatly influenced the perception of self athletic ability.

Later, Greendorfer (1977) examined the manner in which women were socialized into sport. She found that peers were the major influence for women, although the family exerted the initial influence during childhood. Teachers and coaches were influential for girls in sport during adolescence and female-role models were a significant influence for adult sportswomen.

Support of the masculine-role in sport by parents was confirmed in a study of college athletes by Sage (1980), reported in 1980. The results of his inventory revealed that the parents of collegiate male athletes were more involved in his athletic participation than parents of college female athletes, and that although both parents were supportive of their children's involvement in sport, fathers were more supportive of sons than of daughters.

These studies seem to draw different conclusions when females are observed separately from males in sport.

Adults represent the impact of socialization in sport over a much longer experience than children. Three studies exemplify how young participants react to sex-role socialization in sport.

Selby and Lewko (1976) studied children's attitudes toward female involvement in sport during the mid seventies. They found that boys and girls under grade four regarded girls' participation in sport similarly. However, fifth and sixth grade boys were less favorable about girls playing sport if they, themselves, participated, than if they were not participants. Conversely, girls who played sports as fifth and sixth graders, were more favorable about girls participating in sports, than those girls who were non-participants.

Scanlon and Passer (1980) reported in a later study of ten to twelve year

olds who played soccer, that both sexes attributed similar team and self causes of game outcome.

Iso-Ahola (1979) linked sex-role stereotypes of fourth grade boys and girls with attribution of competitive outcome in a study conducted in 1978. A novel competitive maze activity was given to participants of different sexes and the results manipulated as to outcome. It was concluded that sex-role stereotypes affect children's perceptions of the causal attributions of the outcome of sport competition. Boys accepted losing to another boy as either a lack of their own ability, or evidence of their opponent's superior ability, but could not attribute ability to losing to a girl or a girl defeating him. Girls were more likely to attribute their defeating a boy to luck rather than when losing to him. Since boys were more likely to attribute their personal ability as the reason for winning over another boy, than when winning from a girl, it was suggested that the separation of boys from girls for competitive sport activities may serve to perpetuate boy's stereotyped views that winning over another male is indicative of masculinity.

A study was conducted during the Fall of 1983 with athletic participants of both sexes representing elementary school, junior high school, high school, and college students age groups. The instrument developed by Selby and Lewko was used in assessing differences between males' and females' attitudes toward females in sport. The results revealed that the advances of women's opportunities of participation in sport in the past decade apparently have not not affected the perception of males or females toward female participation in sport. As reported similarly by Selby and Lewko earlier, female athletes were more receptive of being involved in sport than were male athletes, and their age made no difference in their attitudes.

These studies have offered interesting and vital information to the question of sex-role socialization in sport. They have supported the observation that only a decade ago, women played the dual role of dominant sport competitor and

submissive feminine social person. The research presented indications of this expected behavior changing. The impact of family and others' influence on the female athlete has been projected. Even the pervasiveness of sex roles in sport has been shown in young children.

It remains to be shown whether the enforcement of sex-role stereotypes is effectively retained by harrassment, or if counter actions to harrassing tactics are effective in changing sex-role stereotypes.

The socio-cultural development in America has been described here as consequential to the sex-role socialization of men and women, and influential as such to the manner in which males and females engage in sport. The sex-role is stereotyped by prescribed and expected behaviors. The control and perpetuation of the prescribed sex-role behaviors is assured through subtle harrassment of persons who do not conform to the stereotype.

The values and beliefs held for sport as a masculine domain delves deeper than the phenomena of sport itself.

A visual scheme of various cultural levels where stereotyping occurs and harrassment is effectively used to enforce the stereotypes helps to identify what counter actions have been taken or may yet be taken in the future to nulify the restrictiveness of women's involvement in sport.

It may be concluded in retrospect that the social and cultural more's are indelibly set in America, to the extent that change may occur first through legal access to social restriction, and next through socio-political and thus, economical suppport of both men and women toward sport. At a future time when the social values of adults are accepting of sport as an appropriate expression of the personal self of females as well as males, then sport may not be associated with masculinity, but may be considered an androgynous activity for social expression, and sex roles in sport may not be limiting to the participant.

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